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The..... REFORMER

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Author of "In His Steps," "Robert Hardy's Seven Days," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTER.

John Gordon, heir to riches, refuses a position in his father's bank and leaves home, father and sister to work for the people of the slums. Sordid money getting and a life of frivolity are revolting to him.

CHAPTER II.

"Studying life, eh?" said David Barton.

"ARE you quite sure you understand the situation, Luella?" John Gordon asked the question gravely, but his look did not betray any anxiety yet. He had been talking to Luella Marsh for several minutes. His face also was grave, almost solemnly so, but there was a growing expression of uneasiness upon it as she turned her head toward her lover.

"I think so—yes," she said slowly.

"In other words, you mean no," said John Gordon, smiling slowly.

Luella Marsh returned the smile and then became instantly grave again.

"I would like to ask you a few more questions. May I?"

"Of course."

"Then I don't know that I am quite clear in my mind as to your exact reasons for leaving your own home. Will you try to make me understand that?"

"Luella"— He paused, and for the first time a fear grew upon him that he was going to fail to make her understand the real crisis in his life. Was this the attitude of the woman who could prove to be the companion he would need? Would she hesitate and demand all these proofs and reasons, all these explanations? And yet he felt the need of her. She had thus far satisfied him, and as he faced her now there was only one prayer in his heart, and that was that she would finally cast in her lot with his and say: "Where thou goest I will go. Thy people shall be my people and thy God my God."

He began his explanation while Luella leaned her chin on her hand and watched him with deepening seriousness.

"I am thirty years old. From the time of my birth I have been used to every luxury. I have enjoyed all the elegant comforts of a rich, exclusive, proud family. My father's ambition, as you know, has always been the ambition of a man who has lived a life as remote from the common people as if he had been born in some other world. I have grown up in this atmosphere. I have known as little of the people and their real life as my father. Up to the time of my religious experience I cared as little for the people as I knew about them. Since that experience my whole object in living has changed. I find myself longing to know the people as much as I already love them. It is not enough that I love them at a distance. I must know from close personal experience their daily life. As near as possible I must partake of their sorrows, their privations, their misery. Do not answer me yet." John Gordon eagerly restrained a movement on Luella's part to interrupt with a word. "Why should I not do this, I who have all my life tasted the luxury of soft and easy physical living? There is only one thing for me to do if I accomplish my life's ambition now, and that is to leave the surroundings that are so completely opposed to all the life of the people I have come to love in order that I may know, if possible, as well as love, with intelligent power to help."

"And you ask me to leave my home as you leave yours?"

She did not look at him while asking the question, but in the silence that followed before he replied she turned her face full toward him. His answer came very calmly, but his voice in spite of him trembled a little.

"The woman who becomes my wife will make her home with me. We shall share alike whatever the future contains."

It was perhaps at this moment that Luella Marsh had her first glimpse into John Gordon's real character. She had never given him credit for much imagination or poetic feeling. In reality he had a great deal of both. But she did not change her position of serious thoughtfulness. She only turned her head a little as she said:

"Where do you intend to make your home? Will you tell me in detail?"

"I have not fully decided; probably in Hope House."

"And you expect me to live with you there?"

"If you marry me, yes." John Gordon spoke with effort. His fear had grown with every word she uttered, with every new question she put to him.

"I will never"— she began and rose to her feet. Gordon rose instantly.

"Wait a moment!" She sat down and motioned him to be seated. "Wait! I want to think awhile."

She put her hands over her face, and John Gordon watched and waited. His heart was hungry for her love, but his soul trembled for what he thought was to be her decision. As the minutes went by and she still made no motion his conviction deepened that his knowledge of her character and motives was superficial. All that he really knew was to some degree the strength of her personality. He knew she could not be moved by pleading. If she would not go with him out of a love that pleaded its own cause, John Gordon knew that no other motive would prevail.

When she finally lifted her head, she put her hands behind her and looked full and frank into his face. But what she said surprised him at first until he saw its bearing on her final answer.

"You used the word 'people' a good many times in what you said about your reasons for leaving your father's house. Tell me what you mean by it."

"By the word?" He was doubtful as to her meaning.

"Yes, just what do you mean by saying you are moved by a love for the 'people.'"

"I mean the masses, the multitudes, the people, the humanity that works with its hands for a living, the humanity that toils at the furnace and the loom and the machine, the humanity that lives on days' wages and lives to produce the things that give persons like you and me pleasure, the things we say we must have for our luxurious tastes, Luella!" John Gordon spoke for the first time with the same passion he had used in the interview with his father, a passion that sounded the new note of his redeemed manhood.

"What have we known or cared for humanity? Our days have been wasted in selfish and foolish gratification of the senses, while these, our brothers and sisters, have been not only uncared for by us, but actually unknown. Of what value our boasted culture, our elegant houses, our fine spun clothing, our fastidious habits, if in the refinement of a civilization that is veneered selfishness we play our little plays like children and never wake to the power of usefulness as grownup men and women who have giants' work to do for the weak and less fortunate?"

Luella Marsh listened in genuine surprise. This was another new phase of her lover's character. But there were things said by him that angered her, although while John Gordon was talking she was saying to herself, "I did not know he had any gifts as a speaker that would bear developing."

Looking up at him, noting the flush of feeling on his generally pale face, she spoke the first impulsive thought roused by what he said.

"Do you really classify lives like yours and mine as 'useless?' Are the people, then, the only useful beings? Or is it true that the people as you have defined them are such a needy and suffering quantity as you say? Are they not as selfish in their way as we are in ours?"

He heard her in surprise. It was quickly becoming more clear to each of them that they had much to learn of each other's personality. Still, he was resolved not to argue matters. He had come with one clear, simple purpose in his mind. He did not wish to have it obscured or put into second place. If Luella Marsh would go with him into the life he had chosen, he knew enough of her to feel certain that both their lives would be strengthened and beautified; that if she once cast in her lot with him she would never look back, but would go on clear to the end and bear all things with growing joy and peace. If she decided to reject him and his career because of details in it that were unknown or questionable, then he had no calm answer to his own heart as to the result on himself except to say that his path would be a lonely one. But he was of determination not to leave the matter unsettled. They were not children, but grown man and woman, and should be able to know their own minds.

"Luella, I did not come here to argue with you"—he spoke with great gentleness in reply to her questions—"I want you. I love you. That means I would not hide one particle of the truth from you. If you marry me, it will be a life of burden bearing, it will be a future full of pain in many ways, it will mean very largely a total breaking away from all the soft, easy, pleasant social relations we have both known since we were born. All this is true. I would not try to soften it for you. But it will be a joyful life, a life of satisfaction, a life full of the consciousness of helping to make a better world, of doing something besides playing, Luella!" He forgot in his feeling what he had said ever since he knew her, that she could not be moved by pleading, and, rising suddenly, he went over and kneeled beside her. "Luella! Tell me this simply: Do you love me enough to share the unknown future with me? Will you not come with me, trusting in our love for each other to bear us over hard places and explain new experiences as fast as they become real to us?"

She trembled and hesitated. She had but to reach out her hand and put it in John Gordon's and say one word. She did not move nor speak for almost a minute. Then she said, looking straight in front of her:

"Must I give an answer now?"

"Luella, you have already given me answer! You have promised to be my wife!" The words were spoken by him in a moment of great longing as he saw her indecision and foresaw her inevitable answer.

Her eyes darkened a little.

"I never promised to be the wife of"—

"The wife of"— John Gordon repeated after a silence so long that its suspense was not bearable to him.

"I hardly know how to finish"— She uttered a short laugh, and John Gordon rose at once to his feet. "I can never live in Hope House," she added in a low tone.

"Is that your answer, then?" He stood looking at her calmly, but she did not look up.

"Yes," she finally replied.

"Then we must go our separate ways, so help us God!" he exclaimed in a sudden burst of passion, for his heart was hot within him.

He paused a moment irresolutely and then started to go out. She had not made any motion nor lifted her head to look at him. At the door he turned for an instant and saw, to his astonishment, that her proud head lay on her arms, which were outstretched on the table near which she had been sitting.

He was back by her side, kneeling again and calling her name. When she lifted her head, there were tears on her glowing cheeks.

"John, I cannot bear to have it so."

"Then do you love me, Luella, enough to share all with me?" he cried.

"Yes; I love you, John," she said slowly. But even as she said it she drew back from him a little. "At the same time I do not see why it is necessary to live at Hope House."

"Not necessarily there, but somewhere among the people. Luella, do you not understand my reasons for wanting to know the people?"

"I am not sure," she replied in a troubled tone, and then suddenly she turned away from him and put her head down on her arms again.

John Gordon rose and walked up and down the room. Twice as he went past the table he paused irresolutely, his mind in a turmoil, his heart uncertain. The third time he stopped, with a decision in his manner, and placed his hand on her head.

"I do not ask you to marry me unless you can trust everything to me. If you are not able to say without any fear or doubt, 'I will go with you in all the way you have chosen,' I do not, I cannot, plead with you, Luella. Is that asking too much, dear? Can the man who loves you ask any less?"

"No, no, he can ask no less! But, John, I fear to go"— She had raised her head and was looking at him with more agitation than he had ever known her to show. "I am not certain that I am fitted, that I am adapted, for such a life. I have a horror of the places—the—I do not love the people, John, as you say you do. Am I to blame for that?"

She asked the question almost timidly, but nothing could soften the hardness of the statement to him. He did not yet see that the one thing that kept her from coming to him without any questions was her lack of religious experience. She did not love the people because all her life had been so far devoted to a love of the things that had surrounded her social position.

"No, I do not think you are to blame. But, oh, Luella, could you not learn to love them? Could you not come with me and let the future"—

"I could not pretend," she began, with a return of her proud attitude.

"I do not ask you to pretend. If you love me, will not all the rest be possible?"

She was silent a moment. Then suddenly she looked up and said frankly:

"I would not be true to you if I kept anything back. I not only do not love the people as you do, but I do not see why you should sacrifice your life to them, as you plan to do. I cannot see that you will accomplish anything."

"And is accomplishment the great and only thing? Is there nothing in being or in striving regardless of accomplishment? But I cannot argue the matter. If you love me enough, Luella, all the rest will follow; if you don't, it will all be useless to you."

She still looked at him with the uncertain, disturbed air that had marked her manner when he first began to talk to her, only the look had deepened into an expression of doubt and painful unrest.

"I do not see the need of all you plan to do. I do not see the need," she said slowly.

"You would not have to see that if you only loved me," he replied in a low tone, and there was a hopelessness in it that had not been present before. He stood looking at her, and suddenly he added:

"Let us be entirely frank, Luella, that we may not misunderstand. You shrink from the thought of living in a place like Hope House; you hesitate to commit your future to me because of the physical losses, the absence in our future of these physical luxuries we have both known, into which we have been born—is that it? Your love for me is not strong enough to make this loss seem insignificant—is that true?"

It was a blunt question, and he purposely put it bluntly, perhaps more so than was fair to her. Over her face the color deepened, and she evidently felt the implied reproach in his summing up of her hesitation.

"That is not quite the truth."

"A part of it?"

"You have no right to force such a question upon me."

"I have a right to know the whole truth."

"You would not understand"—

"I would understand everything if you loved me enough to go with me without question."

"Love does not mean being unreasonable."

"Yes, Luella, it does, at least this far—that love will trust where it cannot always give reasons."

She was silent again.

He took a step nearer.

"Luella, one question only: If I decide that I must go to live in Hope House, will you go with me? Or will you refuse on account of the physical and social loss?"

She looked at him steadily at first, although her color deepened and her lips trembled.

"You have no right to ask such a question."

"I have—the right of a man who loves you."

"Then I will say not go, not for the reason you think, but"—

"It is not necessary to explain," John Gordon answered sadly. "Luella, it is plain to me that you do not love me."

"You have no right to make any such test!" she exclaimed passionately.

She stood up and faced him proudly, and he simply looked into her eyes a moment and then turned and walked out of the room. This time he did not look back. As he closed the door, Luella Marsh fell upon her knees by the side of the table, exclaiming:

"God pity me! God have mercy!"

John Gordon went out of the house calmly enough, although his heart was torn with passionate conflict. As the current of the city swept him on, there surged up in his soul hot anger that he had ever loved this woman who could not have the test of faith in the man who loved her. But it was at this crisis that his real religious experience rescued him from wreck. Had it not been for that this story had never been told. But as he went his way that day his anger fell, and in its place there grew up a tender memory that left no room for harsh judgment.

But for the present he was overwhelmed by the result. He had put Luella Marsh into the altar place of a proud man's affection. Every day since the time she had pledged her heart to his he had thanked God for what had been given him. Her apparent response to his ambitions, especially noticeable in her correspondence during his absence, had exhilarated him. To find now that she would not trust her life to him because he had chosen a career of hardship and loss of physical things struck him the severest blow he had ever experienced. The failure on the part of his father and sister to understand or sympathize became insignificant compared with this event. As he walked along he began to torture himself with questions. Had he made a mistake in taking her answer as final? Had he, as she said, no right to make such a test? Was it asking too much of any woman to ask her to leave a home of luxury to which she had been accustomed from birth and go at once into surroundings that were repulsive to her? And then she had confessed that she did not love the people as he did, but—was that an unpardonable sin? Yet he had felt when she said it as if an impassable gulf had suddenly been dug between them. Had he acted as a man should act who has so much at stake as in this case?

The torture of these questions was so keen that after walking several blocks he turned to go back.

"I must see her again," he kept saying. "I cannot let it end here."

He went up the steps and rang the bell. The servant who came to the door eyed him curiously.

"Miss Marsh has gone out," she said, and John Gordon at first did not believe her until he remembered that the carriage was standing at the curb when he left Luella and that she had said something about going out to the park before tea.

He slowly went down the steps, and when he was on the sidewalk he paused.

Perhaps in all his life he had never felt so lonely as at that moment. The consciousness that his father and sister and now the woman who had promised to be his wife had repudiated his life smote him with a sense of personal abandonment that was keen and searching.

For a moment he felt so completely alone that he let go of every motive for action. The city and the overwhelming thought of its misery and sin and selfishness enraged him. "Let us eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die!" he cried out, and nothing at that moment would have saved John Gordon except the fact that what he had mentioned to his father and sister and Luella as his religious experience was the greatest fact so far in his career. As he stood still there at the foot of the steps gradually his spirit grew calmer. The consciousness of God in his life grew stronger. The purpose of his ambition cleared. And after a little while he started on, knowing that his life work would not be changed in its main intent by anything that had so far happened. Only as he went on he also knew that he could not and would not be the same man and do the same things in some parts of his earthly vision as if Luella Marsh had decided to walk with him in the way. It was also quite clear to him that without being able to give a good reason for it he was not closing the chapter with Luella yet. He certainly entertained the idea of her still coming into his life. It was not from his interview with her that he drew any such hope. But he knew that he did not yet consider her action as final, or possibly it was his own action that was not final.

He stopped at a corner, and the sight of a street name on a car going by decided his next movement.

"I'll go and take tea at Hope House," he said to himself, and took the car, noting, by the time, that he would reach the house just as the little family of residents were in the habit of sitting down to their evening meal.

Hope House stood in the midst of its desert of tenements and its corner saloons and vaudeville halls like an oasis of refuge and strength. Saloons to right and left and front and rear, with piles of brick and wood and rubbish flung together in chaotic, tumbled heaps, with openings for human beings who streamed in and out of court and alley and doorway or sat in pallid, huddled masses on the stoops or curbing formed the frame in which Hope House was set, unique and alone.

John Gordon left the car one block from Hope House and walked down past five saloons in the block until he came to the arched entrance of the house. Going into the little court, he breathed a sigh of relief at the sight of the familiar oleander tubs that stood against the outer wall of the court, and marveled at their ability to blossom with such freshness in such surrounding.

"If oleanders ever had any fragrance in this part of the city, they must almost smell of beer and sewer gas," he said to himself as he went on into the broad hall that opened on the court. He was by no means a stranger to Hope House. Since his return from abroad he had been a frequent visitor and had been welcomed with that inner welcome that springs from well known common purposes.

"You are just in time!" called out a quiet but cheerful voice as John Gordon stepped into the doorway of the dining hall. "Miss Manning is absent. You may take her seat by me."

"I count myself fortunate," John Gordon replied as he took the seat, returning the greetings of those at the table.

"We were talking about you," said the head of the house, with her quiet but earnest manner.

"I'm sorry to interrupt the conversation," replied John Gordon.

"No interruption, we assure you. We are glad you came in, for you are the only person who can answer a question Mr. Ford just asked."

"Rather a personal question, Mr. Gordon," said Ford, a student from the university, who was a resident of several months' standing. "The question I asked Miss Andrews was this: 'What is Mr. Gordon going to do? Will he possibly come in here with us?'"

John Gordon did not answer the question at once. He knew the complete freedom of the social atmosphere of Hope House, especially at mealtimes, and understood well that his silence would not be misconstrued as discourtesy.

He looked around the circle of earnest, friendly faces at the table, and his gaze included, as it had many times before, the room itself, with its high, dark wainscoting, its few but choice portraits, its plain but attractive homelikeness; but, as on every other occasion, his look finally came back to the face of the head of the house, for she was the genius of the place.

Grace Andrews was in her thirty-sixth year. At the time John Gordon first met her at Hope House she had been in charge of the settlement for twelve years. Twelve years of association with desperate human problems such as those that swarmed like the people themselves had left on her face marks of that human, divine calmness that all great women bear who have loved the people. If Grace Andrews did not impress strangers or visitors as being great in any real sense, it was because the look of her face spoke of a quiet peace that so many people superficially associate with meekness, but do not consider as an element of power. The residents of Hope House understood all that, and the oldest residents understood it better than the youngest and had more unquestioned reverence for the greatness of Grace Andrews than those who had less knowledge of her.

It was with a deepening consciousness of what this woman was and of her wonderful life and influence that John Gordon came into her presence. He had met her during his university career when some special studies had taken him down to Hope House. And one of the first places he had visited on his return from abroad had been the dining room with its fellowship life presided over by that central figure that dominated the entire group. It was at that first meeting that he had frankly told her and the residents something of his religious experience and its bearing on his life work. It was that frank confidence that had led up to the question by Ford.

"Well?" Miss Andrews finally said as John Gordon seemed ready to speak after looking at her so intently. During his silence the conversation at the table had gone on in a quiet but natural fashion. Every one in Hope House always gave every one else perfect freedom for his personality, and no one felt at all disturbed when John Gordon did not reply at once to the student's query. They all paused in their talk when he spoke.

"I've been thinking of it. I would count it an honor to be part of your family." He spoke to Miss Andrews, but included all the table with a gesture. "I'm still in some doubt concerning my future. I am sure you are enough interested in me to care to know that I have left my own home. I am just at present without a permanent place of abode. Perhaps you would be willing to take me in."

He spoke somewhat lightly, but not without a certain seriousness that they all seemed to understand. Miss Andrews glanced at him quickly and said with a real tone of sympathy:

"We would not only give you a hearty welcome, Mr. Gordon, but count ourselves fortunate to have you with us."

"Thank you," he replied gratefully. "I would not come into the house, of course, except as one who would take the position of a learner. I have everything to learn and nothing to contribute. You would have to teach me the simplest duties of a resident, Miss Andrews. I at least would be a very willing and obedient pupil."

"I have no doubt of that," she replied, with a smile. "But the people who act that way are dangerously apt to be in a position to teach their teachers in time."

"I shall never be able to teach the teacher in Hope House," said John Gordon earnestly. Miss Andrews laughed, and the faintest tinge of color appeared on her cheeks. "We are all learners here. Let him who has not learned something today hold up his hand. Not a hand in sight. Oh, we are all in the primary class! The people are the alphabet of God. And we have not yet learned the alphabet."

The talk gradually circled the table, while John Gordon continued to tell Miss Andrews something in detail of the interview with his father and sister. After the meal was over the residents scattered to their work, but half a dozen with Miss Andrews and John Gordon lingered a few minutes in the library and living room, which opened out of the wide hall, next the old fashioned staircase which went up near the center of the room, for Hope House had formerly been an old family mansion, and it stood now in its solitary refinement of interior in complete contrast to every building in the dismal district now ruled and ruined by the human ruins that pleaded day and night for rebuilding until the souls of the residents grew weary with the burden, and God either grew daily farther away or closer by, in proportion as the workers in the settlement grew more and more to love the people or more and more to lose faith in their redemption.

When John Gordon finally went away, he had practically promised to become a permanent resident of Hope House. Something of John Gordon's family history was known to most of the residents, and there was enough of the romantic and unusual in such a decision as his to stir the imagination of the earnest young men and women who had thrown in their lot with Hope House and what it stood for in the city.

When John Gordon came out from the archway and turned into the street, it was after 9 o'clock. He walked along for half a dozen blocks, trying to realize what his life work would be in such a place. Whatever else it would be, he knew it would be a life that would demand inexorably all the manhood possible. As he stopped and looked back down the street and realized its wretchedness, its discomfort, its squalor, its moral filth, his heart cried out for strength, his soul felt compassion and anger and longing, and his love of the people, to his intense satisfaction, grew in spite of what they were and because of what they were.

He was still standing there, absorbed in his thought of future possibilities, when a man put his hand on his shoulder and said familiarly:

"John, do you want good company? I'm with you if you do."

"David!" cried John Gordon in astonishment. "How do you happen to be here?"

"Studying life, eh?" said David Barton as he put his arm within his friend's and walked on.

"But how does it happen that you"—

"Having a week's vacation. Harris told me I'd better go to Colorado. Been down here every night."

John Gordon walked on in deepening astonishment.

"Come up to the rooms and let us have a talk," said Barton, and John Gordon quietly agreed. They took a car and after riding two miles left the car, walked two blocks and came out on Park Boulevard, where David Barton, managing editor of the Daily News, had apartments.

When they were seated, David Barton turned a sharp, nervous, but kindly face toward John Gordon.

"Surprised to see me down in the region of Hope House? Great place, isn't it? Worth more than a trip to the Rockies to go through the show."

"Do you mean to say you have never been down around Hope House before?"

"I've been there several times, my son."

"Do you know Miss Andrews?"

"Knew her before you were out of high school."

"You never told me."

"Why should I tell you everything at once?"

"Several years is not at once," replied John Gordon, with a smile.

For answer the older man gravely said after a pause:

"How old are you, John?"

"Thirty."

"And I'm forty. The pace is killing me. Harris says I may last five years more. I doubt it. He is evidently anxious to keep me going the five years. Do I look bad?"

He thrust his pale, nervous face forward, and John Gordon was almost shocked at his friend's manner. He was so much moved that he rose and went over and laid his hand on the other man's arm.

"David, you're not well. Why don't you take Harris' advice and go out to Colorado, not for a week, but for a year?"

"As bad as that?" David Barton said dryly. "I think I'm good for the five years. But tell me about yourself."

"I've left home, and I'm going to take up residence in Hope House."

"No! What! Live there?"

David Barton seemed to pay no attention to the fact of his friend's leaving home.

"I've been there tonight and made definite arrangements with Miss Andrews. I must go there in order to fit myself for my work."

"Your work?"

"Yes; for the people," replied John Gordon simply.

"Pooh! The people!"

David Barton sniffed contemptuously.

"Who knows who the people are?" He stopped suddenly, and his whole manner changed. His sharp, abrupt, indifferent alertness was smothered out of his face like magic. He rose and walked through the room while John Gordon, who understood his moods quite well, listened in astonishment.

"John, listen to me. I believe I know something of your plans and ambitions. You're the only man I know who would do what you propose to do. I don't have much faith in it. At the same time I believe in you, John. I spoke contemptuously of the people, but in my heart, John, I love the people. I am one of them. Tonight as I saw children rotting in those holes I could have died for them. But the martyr's stuff is not in me to die for them except by proxy. Let me tell you, John, you are going at the thing backhanded. What do you want to go and live in Hope House for? Miss Andrews is doing splendid work, but even her efforts don't accomplish anything. Conditions are as bad there now as they were twelve years ago. It's good flesh and blood thrown to the lions while the politicians and the gang look on and laugh at the human helplessness. Why, it is simply an outrage on civilization that a city like this lets a woman like Miss Andrews die by martyrdom in that infernal hell on earth and never gives her the financial and social support she ought to have. And the hounds that own the tenements and saloons and vaudeville property live in luxury and pose as leaders in society and allow conditions to be created that roll a stream of desperate human problems over Miss Andrews that will kill her in a few years. Yes, kill her!"

David Barton spoke with a savage energy that made John Gordon shudder. But when Barton had been silent a moment he continued in a calmer tone to make a proposition to John Gordon that John was totally unprepared for.

"Instead of going into Hope House why don't you come into the News? I can speak for Harris that he will give you full swing on the reform page of your own. You can have it all your own way. I'll help you with special stories and pictures that will make the property owners around Riverside street squirm. Harris is savage with the mayor because of last year's campaign. He'll be glad to get even with the administration by showing up the rotten concern. I tell you, John, there's an earthquake going to rattle the city hall this winter, and Harris and the News will be one name for the earthquake. The old man is just in the mood for pushing the reform business in the name of the people. He will agree to anything I say. The press is the only real power left in the city anyhow. Think of what you can do for the people with the News back of you. We can make a special business of the slum holes and make it mighty interesting for some of the old moneybags of this God forsaken metropolis. Don't answer at once. At any rate, give me time to cough."

David Barton sat down close by John Gordon and had a coughing spell that lasted a few minutes. John Gordon silently watched him, steadily excited by the offer just made to him. Could he accept it? Was it not one of those opportunities that men have come to them but once? What might he not do for the people if a whole page of a great, powerful, practically boundless, wealthy paper were at his disposal? The material he could put before the public! The conditions he could expose! The wrongs he could right! The lives he might save! The possibilities grew larger every moment he thought of it.

David Barton finally ceased coughing and spoke again.

"Well, will you come into the News? What do you say?"

But John Gordon did not answer at once. Suddenly he had thought of Luella Marsh. If she would not marry him as a resident of Hope House, would she not be proud to be the wife of a writer on one of the most powerful dailies of the world? And the same object would be gained for the people. But how about his declaration that he must know the people by direct knowledge gained by living among them? Yet could he not do that in some way and still put this modern lever of the press under the problem?

He faced his friend with strong feeling. The day had been full of events for him, but this closing event affected him in some ways deeper than all the rest.

TO BE CONTINUED.

WOULDN'T DO FOR AN UNDERTAKER.—When the late Warren Ridgeway, politician, sportsman and speculator, was noted in Pike county, Pennsylvania, for his conviviality and quaint sayings, it being necessary to attend to business in New York one day, he dropped fishing and chartered a rig at Milford to go to Port Jervis. The horse was slow and the driver a sleepy lout of a boy who, in spite of an urging, failed to get more than a compromise between a walk and a trot out of the sorry beast. Just as the vehicle turned into Metamoras, Warren roused himself and drawled:

"Bub?"

"Yass, sir."

"What yer going' to be when yer grown up?"

"Dunno; g'lang. Why d'ye ask?"

"Whatever ye do don't be an undertaker."

"Why not, Mr. Ridgeway?"

"'Cause you'd never get yer first corpse 'round in time fer th' resurrection; that's why."

Three rivers as big as the Rhine would just equal in volume the Ganges, three Ganges the Mississippi and two Mississippis the Amazon.

Four thousand seven hundred and seventy miles of thread have been spun out of a single pound of cotton.

The selfish person is quick to accept the generosity of others.